

March 16, 2017

Jewel Baker
Director
Hampton University Convocation Center

Via e-mail

Dear Ms. Baker,

I'm writing on behalf of PETA to follow up on repeated requests that the Hampton University Convocation Center consider requiring that [Garden Bros. Circus](#)—which will appear at your venue this weekend—perform *without* animals. It will do just that the day before in the city of Norfolk, which denied permits to the circus after learning of the long-standing animal-welfare and public-safety issues associated with it.

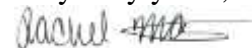
When your venue agreed to host the circus, you surely didn't realize that the elephant exhibitor, [Carson & Barnes Circus](#), recently paid a [\\$16,000 fine](#) to settle a federal lawsuit after three elephants became frightened, escaped from a circus performance, and ran amok for nearly an hour—injuring themselves and causing damage to the venue and its guests' cars in the parking lot. And you probably also didn't know that the circus's general manager, Zachary Garden, has been cited for leaving a sheep to suffer with a [broken leg](#) and failing to notice or care for [bloody puncture wounds](#) on a camel's legs.

But now that you do, PETA hopes you'll see that it's no fun watching an elephant be forced to spin in circles under the threat of a bullhook—a weapon so cruel that it's been banned in two states and many cities, including Richmond. The circus's elephant trainer, Habib Omar, has been [caught](#) yanking on an elephant's ears with a bullhook, and this [video footage](#) shows Carson & Barnes' head trainer telling his protégés to use one to "make 'em scream."

We also hope you'll consider the frightened calf who's [dragged on stage](#) by a metal ring through his sensitive nose and the llama who's forced to jump over a camel at the crack of a whip—especially given that the trick is so difficult that the llama has [fallen on his or her neck](#) while attempting it before.

Acts such as these teach a lesson that society rejected a long time ago: that it's OK to bully, subjugate, and dominate others through force. I hope to hear your compassionate decision soon, and of course, I'd be happy to provide you with PETA's extensive documentation of these exhibitors' federal law violations. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,



Rachel Mathews, Esq.
Associate Director
Captive Animal Law Enforcement

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